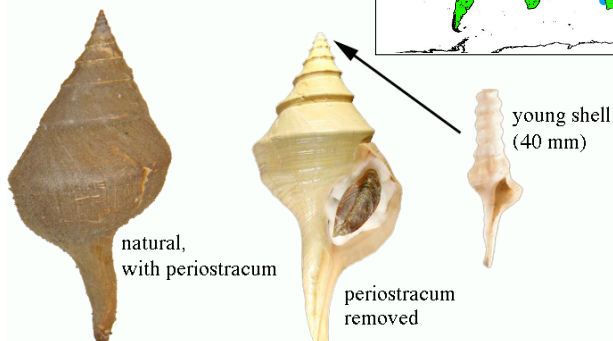
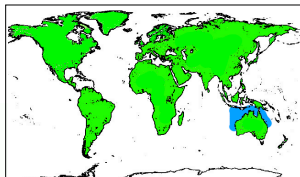


Australian Trumpet

Syrinx aruanus
(Gastropoda - snails)



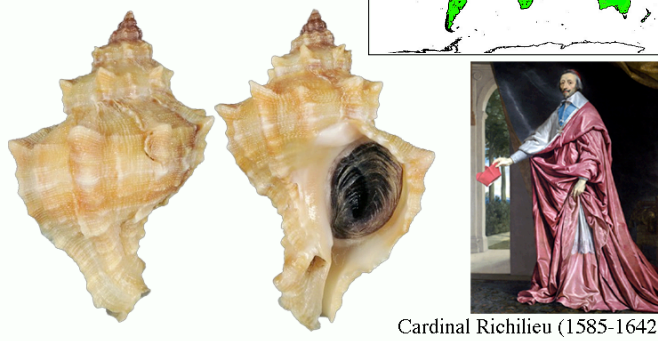
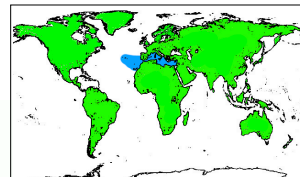
The Australian Trumpet is the largest gastropod. When the young shells hatch they already measure 2.2". Indigenous Australians use the shell to carry water and to carve necklaces. The young shell looks completely different from the adult, and usually breaks off as the shell grows. The untreated shell has a brown coat (periostracum).

Maximum size: 40" (100 cm). Shell weight: 175 oz (5000 g)
Distribution: Northern Australia and Indonesia
Habitat: On sand at 1 to 100 ft. Feeds on 4 ft long worms
Occurrence: Common and not endangered
Life cycle: Large egg clusters. Lives over 5 years
Extras: World's largest snail



Banded Dye Snail

Hexaplex trunculus
(Gastropoda - snails)



Cardinal Richilieu (1585-1642)

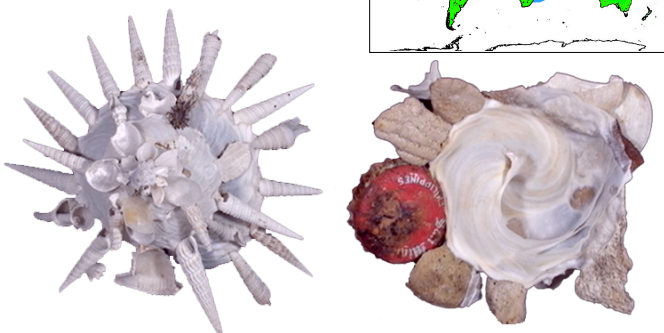
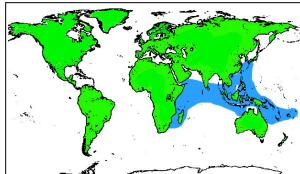
This common snail feeds on barnacles and molluscs by drilling through their shells using acid and a rasping tongue. They produce a yellow slime which aids in paralyzing their prey and in scaring off other predators. This slime turns indigo in sunlight and was used to dye clothes by European cultures 2,500 years ago, till the 18th century.

Maximum size: 4" (10 cm). Shell weight: 1.75 oz (50 g)
Distribution: Mediterranean Sea and Northern Atlantic
Habitat: On sand at 1 to 10 ft. Carnivorous
Occurrence: Abundant, not endangered
Life cycle: Hundreds of eggs, no planktonic phase
Extras: Secretes a slime that turns to indigo blue dye



Carrier Shell

Xenophora pallidula
(Gastropoda - snails)



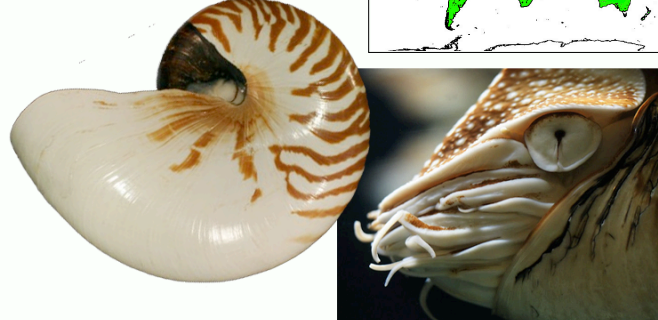
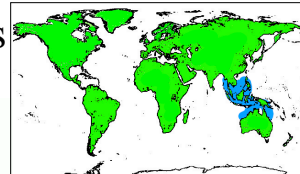
Humans have "invented" waste. In nature, everything gets recycled. Carrier Shells collect dead pieces of coral, small rocks, empty shells and even broken glass and bottle caps. These foreign objects are cemented to the Carrier Shell along the aperture, while the thin shell grows and camouflages it perfectly in its muddy habitat.

Maximum size: 2.5" (60 mm). Shell weight: 1.75 oz (50 g)
Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-Pacific
Habitat: On mud at 60 to 3,000 ft. Feeds on detritus
Occurrence: Locally common
Life cycle: Little known. The larvae are planktonic
Extras: Attaches objects to its shell



Chambered Nautilus

Nautilus pompilius
(Cephalopoda)



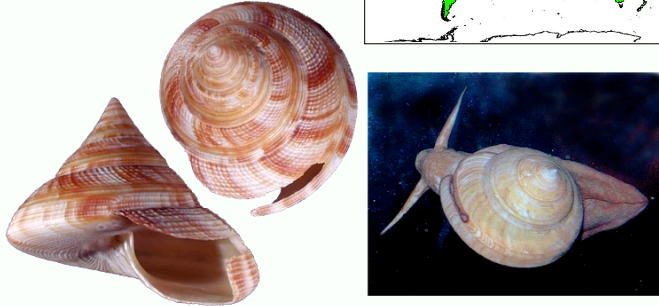
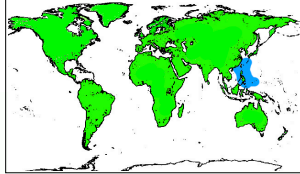
Nautilids are Cephalopods, related to squids and octopodes. As survivors since the times of dinosaurs, they are considered "living fossils." Their colorful shell has chambers that can be filled with gas to regulate the animal's buoyancy. The shell has beautiful iridescent mother of pearl, but is a bad souvenir, as all Nautilids are protected by law.

Maximum size: 10" (25 cm). Shell weight: 9 oz (250 g)
Distribution: Asia, Northern Australia
Habitat: Along reef walls at 400 to 2000 ft. Carnivorous
Occurrence: Becoming scarce, endangered
Life cycle: Eggs take 1 year to hatch. Lives 20 years
Extras: Gas chambers for buoyancy



Chinese Slit Shell

Mikadotrochus hirasei
(Gastropoda - snails)



Long before dinosaurs ruled the world, these interesting shells already populated the oceans. Today, there are about 30 species, which live in deep water and feed on sponges. The living animal has its gills next to a characteristic slit along the side of the shell. Until recently, all species of slit shells were great rarities, but some have recently been fished in fair numbers, as a by-catch of shrimp trawlers.

Maximum size: 4" (10 cm). Shell weight: 4 oz (110 g)

Distribution: Scattered in East Asia

Habitat: On rubble at 300 to 1,000 ft. Feeds on sponges

Occurrence: Moderately common

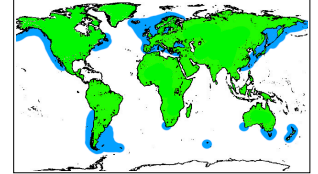
Life cycle: Little known. Planktonic larvae

Extras: A "living fossil"



Edible Mussels

Mytilus species
(Bivalvia - mussels)



The various species of *Mytilus* are an important food source to man. As filter feeders, mussels play an important role in cleaning the seawater. The animal attaches itself to intertidal rocks in rough water by secreting protein strings called byssus. This material, also known as mussel-silk, is so durable that it was used for weaving gloves and robes.

Maximum size: 6" (15 cm). Shell weight: 0.9 oz (25 g)

Distribution: Widespread in colder seas

Habitat: On rocks, to 2 ft. Filter feeder

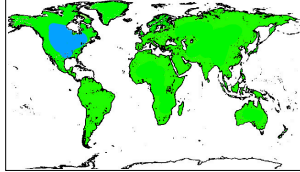
Occurrence: Abundant. Life cycle: 10 million eggs per year, planktonic larvae. Lives up to 10 years

Extras: Food source. Produces byssus



Fatmucket Clam

Lampsilis siliquoides
(Bivalvia - mussels)



As adults, these mussels hardly move. Would their larvae be released in the water, the populations would be carried downstream over time. Most river mussels use a vessel: their larvae settle in the gills of fish that travel upstream. After a few weeks, they drop and grow up. The Fatmucket attracts fish with a lure-like protuberance and sheds its larvae straight into the fish's mouth when it takes the bait.

Maximum size: 4" (10 mm). Shell weight: 1 oz (30 g)

Distribution: In clean rivers in North America

Habitat: In gravel of river at 1 to 3 ft. Filter feeder

Occurrence: Still common locally, but vulnerable

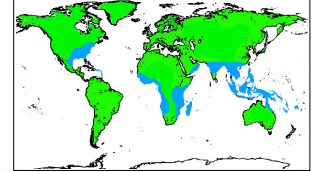
Life cycle: Parasitic larvae. Lives many years

Extras: Uses a lure to attract fish



Giant Agate Snail

Lissachatina fulica
(Gastropoda - snails)



Like most landsnails, Agate Snails are Hemaphrodites (the animal has both sexes). Originally from Africa, it became an invasive species throughout the world. It was brought to the Pacific islands as a food source for US military in WW II. But it turned into a pest to agriculture, and introducing a predatory snail to fight it has led to extinction of many indigenous land snail species that also got eaten.

Maximum size: 10" (25 cm). Shell weight: 4 oz (110 g)

Distribution: Scattered, worldwide tropics, often introduced

Habitat: Landsnail in moist, warm climate. Feeds on plants

Occurrence: Abundant, a pest to agriculture

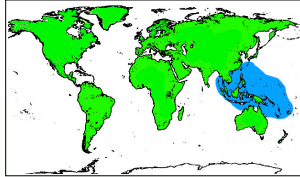
Life cycle: Up to 500 eggs. Lives up to 20 years

Extras: A delicious and efficient food source



Giant Clam

Tridacna gigas
(Bivalvia - mussels)



© S. Johnson, © Wikimedia Commons

Giant clams live in tropical coral reefs. They are the largest mussels, weighing up to half a ton when alive. Their mantle tissue is inhabited by algae whose photosynthesis supplies most of the food for the mussel. The flesh of giant clams is eaten, and the shells are a popular item for decoration. All species of Giant Clams are protected by law.

Maximum size: 47" (120 cm). Shell weight: 500 lb (250 kg)

Distribution: Widespread in the Western Pacific

Habitat: In reef and on sand at 1 to 15 ft

Occurrence: Becoming rare, protected by law

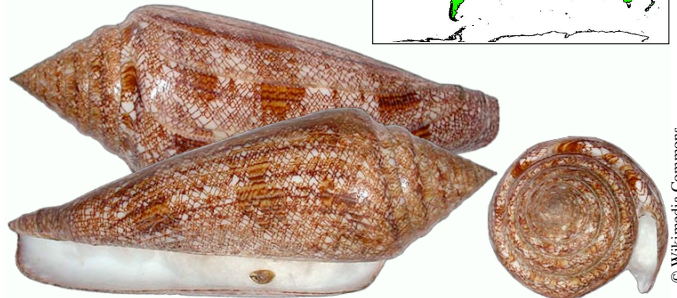
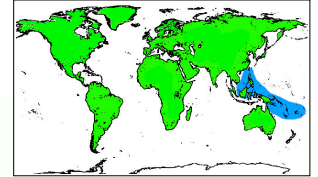
Life cycle: Millions of planktonic larvae

Extras: Largest mussel. Photosynthetic symbionts



Glory of the Seas

Conus gloriamaris
(Gastropoda - snails)



© Wikimedia Commons

This elegant species lives buried in sand during daytime, hunting other gastropods at night. Like all Cone shells, it uses poisonous syringe-like teeth to kill its prey. Its shell was highly prized in the 18th century, with only few specimens known. But 40 years ago, Philippine fishermen found a trick to catch these shells: by sinking old nets in which the animal gets entangled on its nightly excursions.

Maximum size: 7" (175 mm). Shell weight: 3.5 oz (100 g)

Distribution: Western to central Pacific. Feeds on snails

Habitat: On sand and in reef at 10 to 400 ft

Occurrence: Rare, because it is hard to find

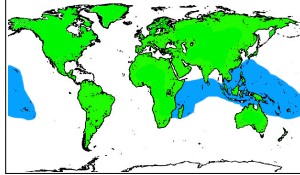
Life cycle: Little known, it has planktonic larvae

Extras: Once a great rarity. Highly poisonous



Green Turban

Turbo marmoratus
(Gastropoda - snails)



The large, solid shell has a thick layer of mother of pearl. A thick and heavy circular door (operculum), can seal the shell to protect the animal. The shell is used for carving spoons and other items, and its meat is popular as food in Asia. Over-collecting has severely depleted the populations.

Maximum size: 12" (30 cm). Shell weight: 35 oz (1000 g)

Distribution: Widespread. Tropical Indo-Pacific

Habitat: On rocks at 3 to 5 ft. Feeds mainly on algae

Occurrence: Uncommon to rare, threatened

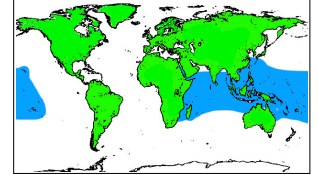
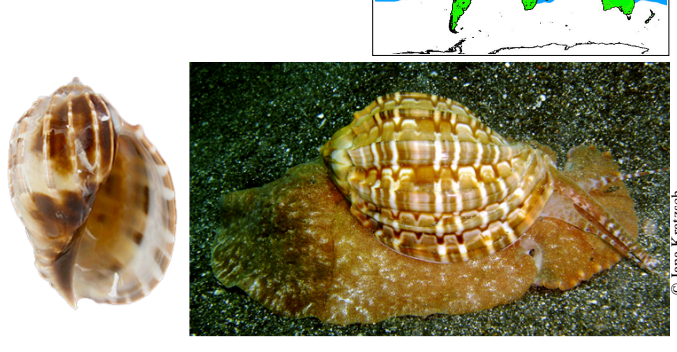
Life cycle: Little known. Planktonic larvae

Extras: Thick mother of pearl, massive operculum



Harp Snail

Harpa major
(Gastropoda - snails)



This attractive and fast moving gastropod is a predator on crabs and sea urchins, which it captures with the front section of its foot, using mucus and toxins. The animal is very large and cannot be fully retracted into the shell. Like lizards, Harps can shed the rear portion of their foot when attacked (a process called autotomy) to confuse a predator.

Maximum size: 5" (12 cm). Shell weight: 1.75 oz (50 g)

Distribution: Widespread throughout the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: On muddy sand at 1 to 100 ft. Carnivorous

Occurrence: Moderately common

Life cycle: Little known, there are planktonic larvae

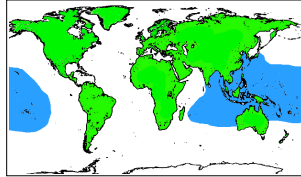
Extras: Can shed a portion of its foot



© Jana Kretzsch

Heart Cockle

Corculum cardissa
(Bivalvia - mussels)



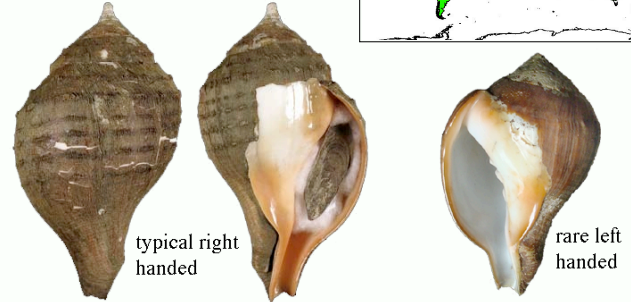
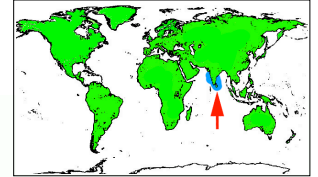
The thin shells of this mussel form the shape of a heart. The animal lies flat on sand in shallow water. Algae living in its tissues produce nutrients through photosynthesis while enjoying the shelter of the shell. Communities of different species of mutual benefit are called symbiosis.

Maximum size: 2" (5 cm). Shell weight: 1/6 oz (5 g)
Distribution: Widespread. Tropical Indo-Pacific
Habitat: On sandy bottom at 2 to 30 ft
Occurrence: Moderately common, not endangered
Life cycle: Floating larvae. Lifespan unknown
Extras: Symbiosis with photosynthetic algae



Indian Chank

Turbinella pyrum
(Gastropoda - snails)



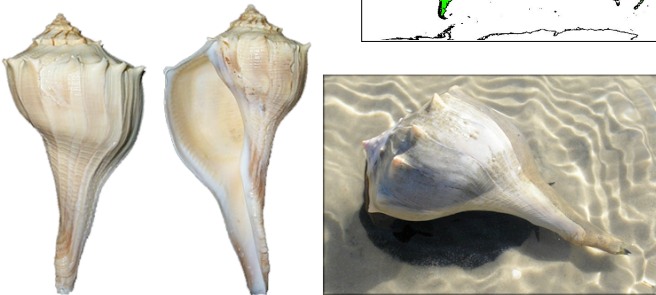
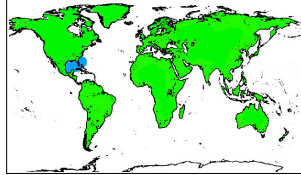
This heavy shell lives on sand and feeds on worms. It has a thick brown coat (periostracum). Its larvae are not free swimming, but crawl away from the egg. This limits the ability to disperse over long distances, so the range of this species is restricted. Like most gastropods, it usually coils right-handed. The extremely rare left-handed variation is sacred in the Hindu religion, and very expensive.

Maximum size: 10" (25 cm). Shell weight: 35 oz (1000 g)
Distribution: Restricted to India and Sri Lanka
Habitat: On sandy bottom at 30 to 90 ft. Feeds on detritus
Occurrence: Common in restricted areas
Life cycle: Lays 30 eggs. No planktonic larvae
Extras: Left-handed shells are sacred



Lightning Whelk

Sinistrofulgur perversum
(Gastropoda - snails)



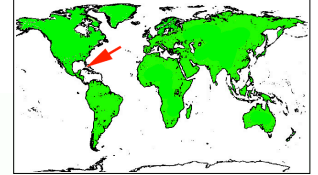
This large American species is striking because it coils left (sinistral), unlike most other marine gastropods. It feeds on mussels, which it squeezes open using its muscular foot. Lightning Whelks are exported to India to fool good-faithful collectors: carved and plated with silver, it somewhat resembles the rare and expensive sacred left-handed variation of the Indian Chank shell.

Maximum size: 12" (30 cm). Shell weight: 27 oz (750 g)
Distribution: Quite restricted to Florida and Texas
Habitat: On sandy bottom at 1 to 3 ft. Carnivorous
Occurrence: Common
Life cycle: 3 ft long strings of eggs, not planktonic
Extras: Left handed (sinistral)



Living Jewel

Liguus fasciatus
(Gastropoda - snails)



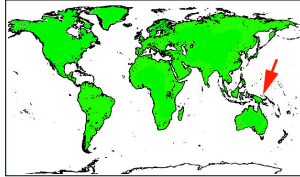
This attractive tree snail feeds on fungi and algae which it rasps off the bark. It is assumed that a hurricane cast specimens from Cuba to Florida, where it still thrives in the Everglades. There is a multitude of color forms, some of which have disappeared due to habitat destruction. Of the animal species reported extinct, 40% are landsnails.

Maximum size: 2.7" (7 cm). Shell weight: 1/6 oz (5 g)
Distribution: Scattered in South Florida, and Northern Cuba
Habitat: In trees, on hammocks in the Florida Everglades
Occurrence: Formerly common, locally endangered
Life cycle: Lays only few eggs. Lives to 10 years
Extras: More than 120 names for color variations



Manus Tree Snail

Papustyla pulcherrima
(Gastropoda - snails)



© Stephen J. Richards, news.mongabay.com

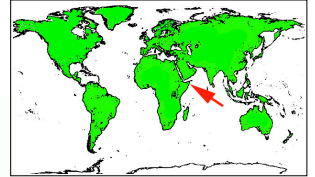
This attractive snail lives in trees and is restricted (endemic) to the small Manus Island in New Guinea. Its bright green color, unusual for gastropods, is caused by a thin protein layer (periostracum) covering the yellow shell. Although it is a protected species by international laws, it is popular food for the Manus islanders.

Maximum size: 2" (4 cm). Shell weight: 1/10 oz (3 g)
Distribution: Restricted to Manus Is., New Guinea
Habitat: Lives on trees. Feeds on lichens and fungi
Occurrence: Locally common, but protected
Life cycle: Lays only few, relatively large eggs
Extras: Green color caused by the periostracum



Matchless Chimera

Chimaeria incomparabilis
(Gastropoda - snails)



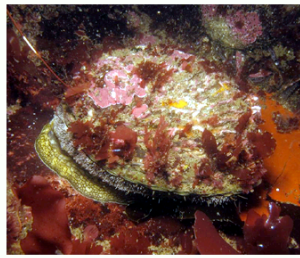
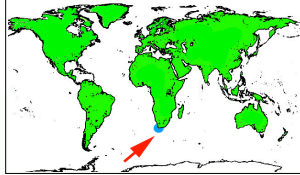
Nothing is known about the exact range and habitat of this large, shiny, chestnut colored shell, which is incomparable. It is the most sought-after and expensive seashell, because no one knows where to find it. In its habitat, it is probably quite common. A shell dealer from Florida went to jail for stealing a specimen from an American Museum in 1997.

Maximum size: 3.5" (9 cm). Shell weight: 3 oz (80 g)
Distribution: Somalia, the exact provenance is unknown
Habitat: Supposedly from 300 ft. Its food is unknown
Occurrence: Only 6 shells have ever been found
Life cycle: Unknown
Extras: The most valuable seashell



Midas Abalone

Haliotis midae
(Gastropoda - snails)



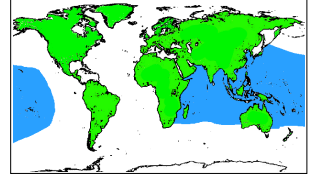
Worldwide there are many species of abalone. The flat shell always has several circular holes for breathing. The interior has iridescent mother of pearl. Abalone meat is a highly valued delicacy exported to Asia. Poachers decimated the populations of this once abundant snail, and rangers are monitoring the South African Cape region.

Maximum size: 5.2" (16 cm). Shell weight: 9 oz (250 g)
Distribution: Restricted (endemic) to South Africa
Habitat: On rocks, in rough sea at 1 to 45 ft. Feeds on algae
Occurrence: Becoming scarce, vulnerable
Life cycle: Up to 10 million eggs. Floating larvae
Extras: Shell with mother of pearl. Delicious meat



Money Cowry

Monetaria moneta
(Gastropoda - snails)



© Scott Johnson

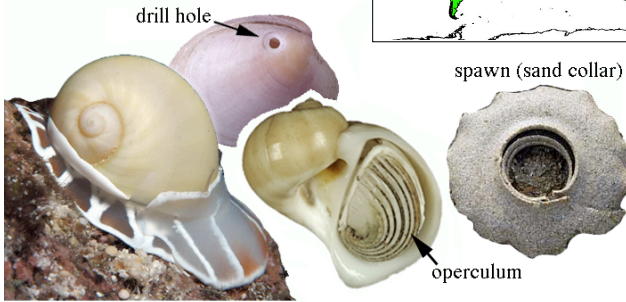
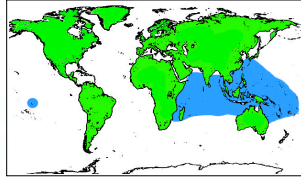
Cowries are shiny like porcelain. The animal covers its shell with a thin mantle that builds the shell and camouflages it. They have separate sexes. A spawn of the Money Cowry contains >100,000 larvae which float with the current (planktonic). This allows for a wide distribution. The small, solid shells were used as currency in China in 1,000 BC, and in the Atlantic slave trade till the mid 19-th Century.

Maximum size: 1.5" (4 cm). Shell weight: 1/6 oz (5 g)
Distribution: Widespread. Tropical Indo-Pacific
Habitat: Intertidally to 3 ft, on reef. Feeds on algae
Occurrence: Abundant, not endangered
Life cycle: Floating larvae. Lives over 15 years
Extras: Very variable shell. Was used as currency



Moon Snail

Naticarius orientalis
(Gastropoda - snails)



© S. Jazwinski, © G. Poppe

This nocturnal hunter of other molluscs captures its prey with its foot and drills into its shell using its rasping tongue (radula) and acid. Empty shells bearing a circular hole are witnesses to Moon Snail attacks. The animal is large when active, but can completely withdraw and seal its aperture with a solid door (operculum). The spawn is a 4" wide gelatinous spiral of eggs and sand, known as a "sand collar."

Maximum size: 2" (4 cm). Shell weight: 1/2 oz (15 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: In sandy areas at 3 to 300 ft. Hunts other molluscs

Occurrence: Common, not endangered

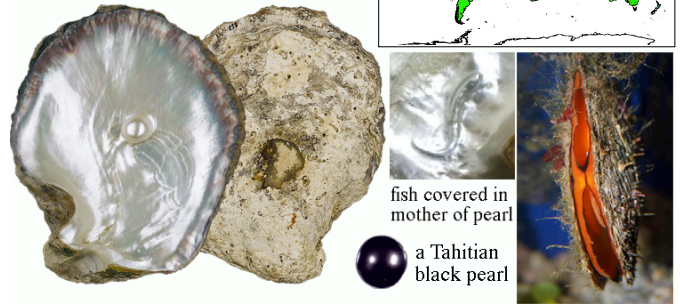
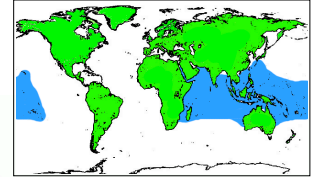
Life cycle: Planktonic larvae

Extras: Drills holes in other shells



Pearl Oyster

Pinctada margaritifera
(Bivalvia - mussels)



fish covered in mother of pearl

a Tahitian black pearl

Pearls are a natural reaction of a living mussel or snail to a foreign object irritating its tissue: a stone, or even a fish. In the wild, pearls are rare, often irregular, or attached to the shell. Pearls used in jewelry are farmed: a tiny sphere made of seashell is inserted into an oyster, which takes years to coat this so-called nucleus with its shiny mother of pearl.

Maximum size: 10" (25 cm). Shell weight: 9 oz (250 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: On muddy bottom at 10 to 150 ft. Filter feeder

Occurrence: Abundant

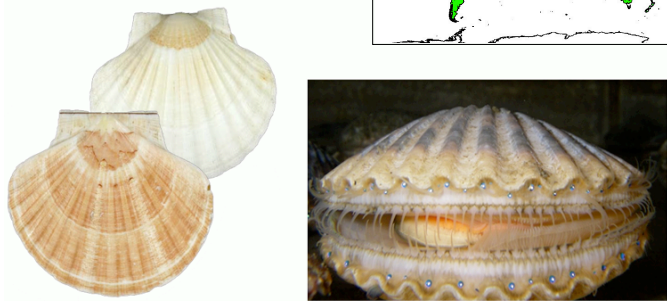
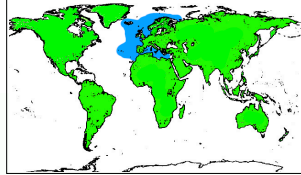
Life cycle: Planktonic larvae. Lives for decades

Extras: Produces valuable pearls. Kept in farms



Pilgrim's Scallop

Pecten maximus & Pecten jacobaeus
(Bivalvia - mussels)



© Wikimedia commons, © G. Poppe

Scallops are an important food source, especially the strong, circular muscle. That opens and closes the two valves, causing a jet stream that allows the shell to swim in a determined direction to escape predators. The animal has 60 blue eyes along the aperture. Like all mussels, it has no brain, but a network of neurons. The shell is a symbol of christian pilgrims in Europe, and a US oil company.

Maximum size: 5" (13 cm). Shell weight: 5 oz (150 g)

Distribution: North Atlantic and Mediterranean. Filter feeder

Habitat: On sandy bottom at 10 to 500 ft

Occurrence: Abundant

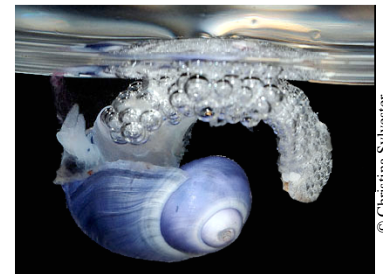
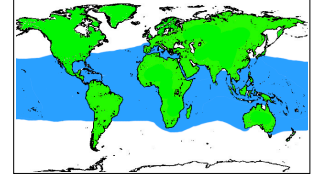
Life cycle: Sheds up to 20 million eggs per season

Extras: Has 60 eyes, but no brain



Purple Snail

Janthina janthina
(Gastropoda - snails)



© Christina Sylvester

These bizarre snails have a thin, purple shell. Their foot adheres to a bubble raft produced by the animal, allowing them to float on the open ocean (pelagic), just below the surface. They feed on jellyfish. Purple snails commonly wash ashore after storms. They begin life as males and later change to females (hermaphrodites).

Maximum size: 1.6" (4 cm). Shell weight: 1/10 oz (3 g)

Distribution: Widespread in warmer seas, planktonic

Habitat: On the open ocean, floating below the surface

Occurrence: Abundant, but rarely observed alive

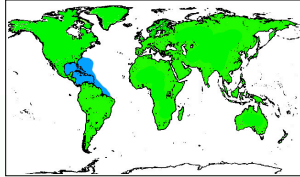
Life cycle: Eggs are held by the female till hatching

Extras: Floats with a bubble raft



Queen Conch

Lobatus gigas
(Gastropoda - snails)



living "roller"

The large shell of this popular species has a wide flaring outer lip of red and pink color. This lip forms after three years. Young shells without it are called "rollers." As the Queen Conch is becoming rare in many places, it is protected by law. There are conch farms throughout the Caribbean to provide the meat traditionally eaten in chowder or the famous conch fritters.

Maximum size: 12" (30 cm). Shell weight: 70 oz (2000 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Caribbean

Habitat: On weed and sand at 1 to 60 ft. Feeds on algae

Occurrence: Less common than before, protected

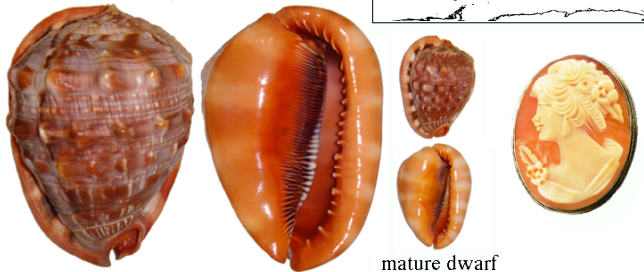
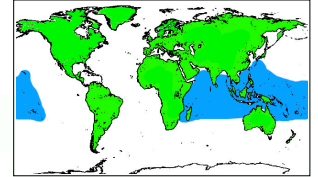
Life cycle: Thousands of eggs, planktonic larvae

Extras: A popular Caribbean delicacy



Red Helmet Shell

Cypræacassis rufa
(Gastropoda - snails)



mature dwarf

The large and attractive Red Helmet lives in coral reefs and areas with seaweed. It varies in size. Once the thick red base is formed, the shell-length no longer increases (determined growth). It is nocturnal and feeds on sea urchins, which it kills with acidic mucus. The shell was used for carving cameos since Victorian times. It has become scarce in some places, due to over-collecting and pollution.

Maximum size: 7" (18 cm). Shell weight: 30 oz (900 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: In reef and on seaweed at 3 to 150 ft. Carnivorous

Occurrence: Still common in East Africa

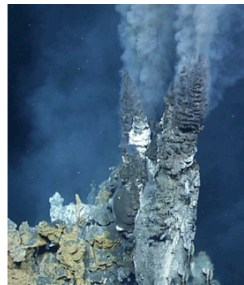
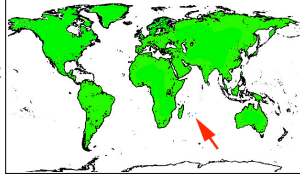
Life cycle: Planktonic larvae. Lives up to 20 years

Extras: Cameos are carved out of its shell



Scaly Foot Snail

Chrysomallon squamiferum
(Gastropoda - snails)



This bizarre snail lives on hydrothermal vents in the deep sea. It is unique in having a shell with an outer layer of iron sulfides, and a foot covered with iron-mineralized scales. In proportion, it has one of the largest hearts in the animal kingdom. It does not actively feed on anything, but lives on the excretions of bacteria that live inside its body.

Maximum size: 1.6" (40 mm). Shell weight: 1/10 oz (3 g)

Distribution: Three hot vents in the Indian Ocean

Habitat: On hydrothermal vents, deeper than 9,000 ft

Occurrence: Very rare, due to its deep water habitat

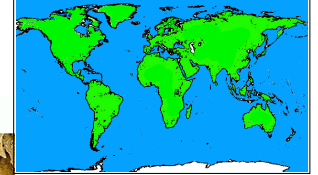
Life cycle: Unknown

Extras: Its strange scales contain iron minerals



Shipworm

Teredo navalis
(Bivalvia - mussels)



shell



The shipworm is actually a mussel whose shell is modified to drill holes. The animal builds a calcareous tube in dead wood. It feeds on plankton, but also, on the wood itself. An infestation with *Teredo* lets wooden jetties, bridges, and boats collapse: Columbus lost nine ships, the Spanish Armada lost the war against England, and Holland got flooded in 1731 as the wooden gates of the dikes collapsed.

Maximum size: 20" (50 cm). Shell weight: 1/20 oz (1.5 g)

Distribution: Worldwide, through ship traffic

Habitat: In dead wood at 1 to 20 ft

Occurrence: Very common

Life cycle: 20 million planktonic larvae per year

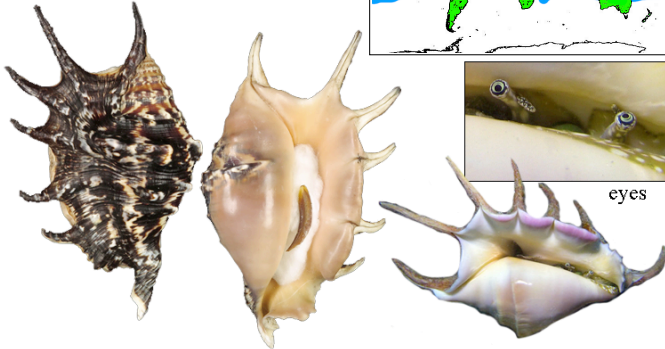
Extras: Had a great impact on the history of man



Spider Conch

Lambis lambis

(Gastropoda - snails)



© Guido Poppe © S. Johnson

The adult Spider Conch has seven solid protective spines along its aperture. Young shells that have not yet formed the spines are vulnerable to fish attacks. Their foot has a horny spine (operculum) that the animal uses to jump, turn itself back when flipped over, or kick at a predator. Spider Conchs have conspicuous "gloating" eyes.

Maximum size: 8" (20 cm). Shell weight: 11 oz (300 g)

Distribution: Widespread. Indo-Pacific

Habitat: On seaweed at 1 to 30 ft. Feeds on algae

Occurrence: Common, not endangered

Life cycle: Thousands of eggs. Planktonic larvae

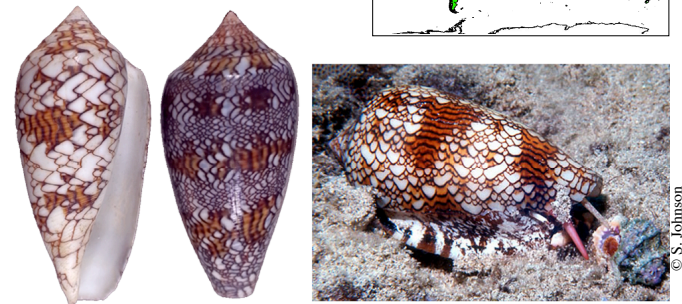
Extras: Has finger-like spines and striking eyes



Textile Cone

Conus textile

(Gastropoda - snails)



© S. Johnson

Conus textile eating another snail

This is a very variable species with a regular net pattern. All Cones are predators of either fish, worms, or other molluscs. They hunt by injecting venom through a syringe-like tooth. These venoms are among the strongest in nature, and are the focus of cancer research. Careless handling of living Cones has caused several human deaths due to accidental stings.

Maximum size: 4" (10 cm). Shell weight: 3.2 oz (90 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: In reef areas at 1 to 200 ft. Predator on other snails

Occurrence: Common, not endangered

Life cycle: Floating larvae. Lifespan unknown

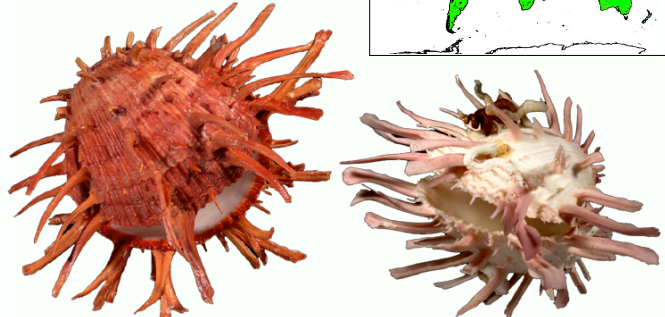
Extras: Its sting can kill a human



Thorny Oyster

Spondylus americanus

(Bivalvia - mussels)



The two valves of this well-known American signature shell are connected by a perfectly interlocking hinge. The lower valve is attached to rocks or coral. The long spines have a protective function, comparable to sea urchins or cacti. There are many variations in color. Regular shells are common, but exceptional specimens with intact long spines are sought-after collector's items.

Maximum size: 8" (20 cm). Shell weight: 10 oz (300 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Western Atlantic

Habitat: On rubble bottom at 20 to 300 ft. Filter feeder

Occurrence: Common, nice specimens are rare

Life cycle: Millions of planktonic larvae

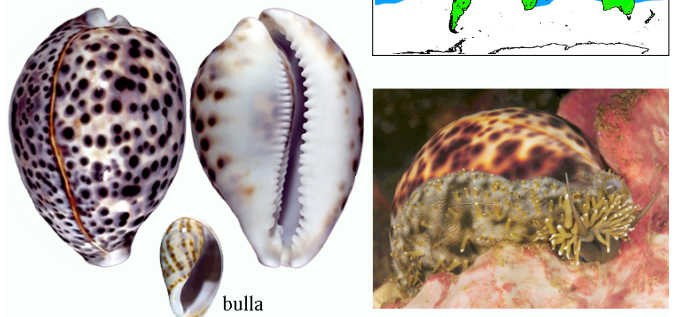
Extras: Protective spines



Tiger Cowry

Cypraea tigris

(Gastropoda - snails)



bulla

This is probably the most popular seashell. Millions of specimens are exported to Europe and the USA from Africa and Asia. Yet, it is abundant on reefs not polluted or devastated by man. All young cowries have a thin, coiled shell called a bulla. Adults have a thick shell with a narrow slit-like aperture and white "teeth". In all cowries, a fleshy mantle covers and builds the shell.

Maximum size: 6" (150 mm). Shell weight: 7 oz (200 g)

Distribution: Widespread throughout the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: On reef at 1 to 200 ft. Feeds on sponges and algae

Occurrence: Locally abundant. Not endangered

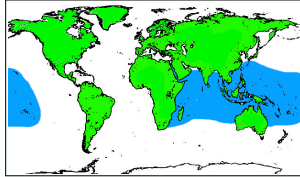
Life cycle: Planktonic larvae. Lives up to 25 years

Extras: The most popular seashell



Triton's Trumpet

Charonia tritonis
(Gastropoda - snails)



attacking a Crown-of-thorns

The impressive Triton's Trumpet has a long free swimming (planktonic) larval stage, which allows the species to disperse over a wide range. It feeds on the Crown-of-thorns starfish, which devastates coral reefs. Living shells should therefore, not be collected. When blown correctly, the Trumpet Shell makes a loud, roaring sound. In the 1970s, a band used these shells to play their music!

Maximum size: 20" (50 cm). Shell weight: 55 oz (1500 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: On reef at 10 to 200 ft, hidden during daytime

Occurrence: Uncommon, but not endangered

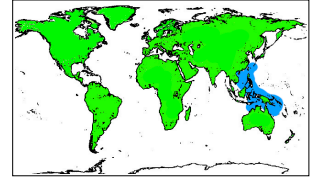
Life cycle: Thousands of larvae. Lives for 10 years

Extras: Can be used as trumpet.



True Wentletrap

Epitonium scalare
(Gastropoda - snails)



© Christina Sylvester

This spectacular shell was a great rarity in the 1800s. The legend persists that Chinese craftsmen imitated the shells using rice paste to fool collectors. Wentletrap snails are a large group of mostly small species that live in close association with sea anemones whose body fluids they feed on (parasitism). There is a horny circular door (operculum) to seal the opening (aperture).

Maximum size: 2.5" (60 mm). Shell weight: 1/3 oz (10 g)

Distribution: Western Pacific, Japan, Northern Australia

Habitat: 10 to 300 ft. A parasite on sea anemones

Occurrence: Uncommon, but not endangered

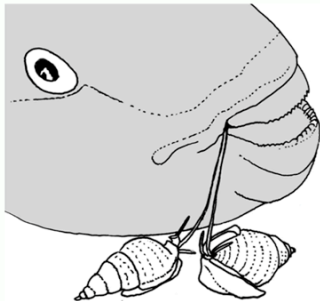
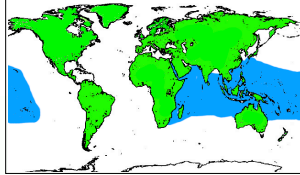
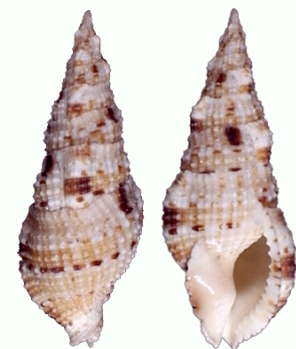
Life cycle: Unknown

Extras: Its whorls do not touch, only the ribs!



Vampire Snail

Colubraria muricata
(Gastropoda - snails)



For a long time, scientists wondered what these rather large and widespread snails fed on, as they lack the characteristic rasping tongue (radula) of gastropods. It turned out that Vampire Snails use a tube-like snout to suck blood from sleeping fish, such as parrot fish, rays, and sharks!

Maximum size: 5" (13 cm). Shell weight: 2 oz (60 g)

Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-Pacific

Habitat: In crevices of coral reef at 10 to 300 ft

Occurrence: Common, but well-hidden

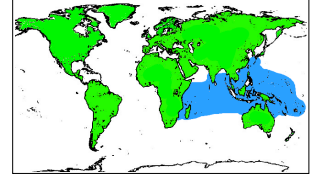
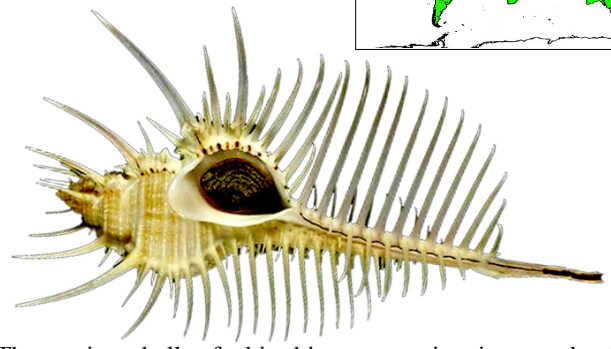
Life cycle: Little known. Has planktonic larvae

Extras: Sucks the blood of fish



Venus Comb

Murex pecten
(Gastropoda - snails)



© Guido Poppe

The entire shell of this bizarre species is armed with numerous sharp and extremely tough spines, which serve as protection against predators and to keep the shell from sinking deeper in the muddy bottom it inhabits. When these animals grow, they have to dissolve some of their spines to add another whorl to their shell.

Maximum size: 5" (15 cm). Shell weight: 1.75 oz (50 g)

Distribution: Widespread. Tropical Indo-Pacific

Habitat: Muddy bottom at 10 to 300 ft. Feeds on molluscs

Occurrence: Uncommon, but not endangered

Life cycle: Floating larvae. Lives 5 to 10 years

Extras: Most spiny shell. Edible

